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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF
DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN
Fifteenth session
15 January-2 February 1996

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN ON ITS FIFTEENTH SESSION

Draft report

Rapporteur: Ms. Hanna Beate SCHöPP-SCHILLING (Germany)

Addendum

III. REPORT OF THE CHAIRPERSON ON THE ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BETWEEN THE FOURTEENTH AND FIFTEENTH SESSIONS OF THE COMMITTEE

1. At the 285th meeting, the Chairperson of the Committee, in her introductory statement, said that 1995 had been a particularly important year in the history of the Committee. The number of ratifications of the Convention had increased from 136 to 150. In April 1995, the Committee had held a one-week meeting at Madrid, hosted by the Government of Spain. That was the first time that the Committee had held an extraordinary meeting supported financially by a Government. The members of the Committee also attended the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing.

2. The Chairperson outlined the meetings attended by the Chairperson and other members of the Committee. She informed the Committee about the sixth meeting of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies. She noted that paragraph 20 of the report of that meeting (A/50/505) highlighted the importance of the human rights treaty bodies for the implementation of the Plan of Action for the United Nations Decade for Human Rights Education and also recommended that each treaty body, in its examination of reports of States parties, investigate their compliance with obligations relating to education and public information on human rights.

3. The Chairperson indicated that the sixth meeting of persons chairing the human rights treaty bodies had reiterated the importance of collaboration with non-governmental organizations. In 1995 she had suggested ways and means of strengthening links between the Committee and non-governmental organizations so that they could assist in lobbying for ratification and implementation of the Convention and provide "shadow" reports on a regular basis. The Committee should consider organizing exchanges of views with non-governmental organizations.

4. With reference to paragraph 22 of the above-mentioned report, the Chairperson said that she had raised the issue of the role of treaty bodies in preparation for world conferences in the hope of avoiding in future the sense of frustration felt by the Committee at not having had an opportunity to take part in the formulation of the Platform for Action. She also noted that the chairpersons had discussed the question of cooperation with special rapporteurs. The Committee should explore ways and means of establishing closer cooperation at least with the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women. Another topic covered was the need for concrete proposals for increased participation by United Nations specialized agencies in the work of the human rights treaty bodies. The Chairperson of the Committee proposed that the Committee should consider proposals to that end during its current session.

5. The Chairperson explained that although the Committee had not yet established relations with all the specialized agencies, it had achieved concrete results with those with which it had undertaken cooperation, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO).

6. The Chairperson also noted recommendation 25 that treaty bodies should fully integrate a gender perspective into their professional and sessional working methods, including identification of issues and preparation of questions for country reviews and general comments and recommendations. This was a big step forward in the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

7. The chairpersons of treaty bodies considered the Secretariat support to treaty bodies and underlined the persistent problems of understaffing of the treaty body secretariats, including that servicing of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. They supported the integration of that Committee into the mainstream of United Nations system-wide activity through its relocation to the Centre for Human Rights.

8. Referring to General Assembly resolution 49/164 of 23 December 1994 concerning the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the decision taken by the eighth meeting of States parties to the Convention in May 1995, she indicated that two thirds of States parties would have to ratify the amendment proposed by the Committee on meeting time for it.

9. The Chairperson pointed out that the Committee had presented to the Fourth World Conference on Women a comprehensive report containing a serious analysis of its work, the obstacles to the implementation of the Convention and the challenges that would have to be faced in the future (A/CONF.177/77). Since Beijing there had been 11 new ratifications of the Convention. The Committee's role and importance had been reflected fully in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. Paragraph 8 of the Declaration placed the Convention on the same level as the Charter of the United Nations and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, as far as the equal rights and inherent human dignity of women were concerned. In paragraphs 322 and 323 of the Platform for Action, the Committee was described as an essential mechanism for monitoring the implementation of the Platform for Action. The Chairperson indicated that the Platform also underlined the need for women's participation in decision-making bodies by stressing the need for universal ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, by calling for restraint in the entering of reservations to the Convention and by examining the need for an optional protocol to strengthen the implementation of the Convention.

10. The Chairperson concluded that the Platform had recognized the central role of the Convention as a document that was legally binding on Governments, thereby strengthening the role of the Committee itself.